

Hamlet

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Throughout Hamlet, many characters develop showing their change of mind and emotions. Gertrude, the Queen of Denmark and Hamlet's mother, is an exception. Throughout the entire play she thinks only of herself. Even when she tries to think of or help others, her final decision revolves around her life and how the situation will affect her. Gertrude's selfishness is displayed in her marriage to Claudius, her forcing Hamlet to accept Claudius as his father, and her betrayal of Hamlet to Claudius after Hamlet sees his father's ghost. Gertrude is continuously selfish throughout the play but, her selfishness began with her marriage to Claudius "but two months dead"(I, ii, 138), of her former husband King Hamlet. Because of Hamlet's reaction to his mother's quick marriage, it is obvious that Gertrude had not thought of his feelings but only of her own. He mentions often that Gertrude "married with my uncle,/ My father's brother," (I, ii, 151-153) "Within a month,/ Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears/ Had left the flushing in her galled eye,/ She married," (I, ii, 154-157). Her action hurt Hamlet deeply and more than any other character in the play. Each instance that Hamlet and Gertrude speak, Hamlet arouses the situation of Gertrude's hasty marriage. It emphasizes her selfishness to both her and Hamlet's lives. When speaking to Hamlet, curious to know if he has gone mad, Hamlet yells "Mother, you have my father much offended," (III, iv, 11). Again, he brings up her marriage which shows his agony to the situation. Gertrude's selfish actions not only affect her life, but the lives of others as well. Because of Hamlet's loss of his father, Gertrude tries to force Hamlet to accept Claudius as a replacement father figure. Hamlet refuses which causes a barrier between him and his mother. Her forceful actions also cause dramatic meetings with Hamlet and other

characters. When speaking with Hamlet, Gertrude says " Hamlet, thou has thy father much offended," (III, iv, 10). When saying this, she has clearly ignored Hamlet's emotions and also tries to hasten his period of mourning. This emphasizes her selfish behavior. Later in the play, because she fears her life, Gertrude agrees to Hamlet's orders and then betrays him. After Hamlet sees his father's ghost when he visits with his mother and Gertrude cannot see the ghost, she concludes that Hamlet, has indeed, gone mad. Scared for her life because Hamlet had just killed Polonius, Gertrude asks Hamlet what she should do and agrees to his answer saying " Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,/ And breath of life, I have no life to breath/ What though hast said to me," (III, iv, 198-201). Selfishly, instead of believing her own son, Gertrude tells Claudius " Mad as the sea and wind when both contend/ Which is the mightier. In lawless fit,/ Behind the arras hearing something stir,/ Whips out his rapier, cries, " A rat, a rat!"/ And in this brainish apprehension kills/ The unseen good old man,"(IV, i, 7-12). She confesses everything that she promised Hamlet she would not. Her selfishness got the best of her. Because she did not believe her son, her husband later poisoned her and her son fought for her revenge. She trusted the wrong person because she thought only of herself, and later lost her life because of it. Gertrude throughout the play struggles to think of the best for others. Because she only thinks of herself, she destroyed her family and eventually lost her life.